

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE
WESTERN DIVISION

THOMAS HALE,

Plaintiff,

vs.

BRENT LONG, et al.,

Defendants.

No. 05-2697-M1/V

ORDER TO COMPLY WITH PLRA
ORDER ASSESSING FILING FEE
ORDER OF DISMISSAL
ORDER CERTIFYING APPEAL NOT TAKEN IN GOOD FAITH
AND
NOTICE OF APPELLATE FILING FEE

Plaintiff Thomas Hale, prisoner number 130892, an inmate at the Northwest Correctional Center, Site 1 ("NWCX")¹ in Tiptonville, filed a pro se complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. The Clerk shall record the defendants as Brent Long, Tony Parker, and the Tennessee Department of Correction.

I. Assessment of Filing Fee

Under the Prison Litigation Reform Act of 1995 ("PLRA"), 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b), all prisoners bringing a civil action must pay the full filing fee of \$250 required by 28 U.S.C. § 1914(a). The in forma pauperis statute, 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a), merely provides the prisoner

¹ The word "prison" is used in this order to refer to all places of confinement or incarceration, including jails, penal farms, detention and classification facilities, or halfway houses.

the opportunity to make a "downpayment" of a partial filing fee and pay the remainder in installments.

In this case, plaintiff has not properly completed and submitted both an in forma pauperis affidavit and a prison trust fund account statement showing:

- 1) the average monthly deposits, and
- 2) the average monthly balance

for the six months prior to submission of the complaint, and

- 3) the account balance when the complaint was submitted.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), it is ORDERED that the plaintiff cooperate fully with prison officials in carrying out this order. It is ORDERED that within thirty (30) days of the entry of this order the plaintiff properly complete and file both an in forma pauperis affidavit and a trust fund account statement showing the above amounts. It is further ORDERED that the trust fund officer at plaintiff's prison shall calculate a partial initial filing fee equal to twenty percent (20%) of the greater of the average balance in or deposits to the plaintiff's trust fund account for the six months immediately preceding the completion of the affidavit. When the account contains any funds, the trust fund officer shall collect them and pay them directly to the Clerk of Court. If the funds in plaintiff's account are insufficient to pay the full amount of the initial partial filing fee, the prison official is instructed to withdraw all of the funds in the plaintiff's account and forward them to the Clerk of Court. On each occasion that funds are subsequently credited to plaintiff's account, the prison official shall

immediately withdraw those funds and forward them to the Clerk of Court, until the initial partial filing fee is paid in full.

It is further ORDERED that after the initial partial filing fee is fully paid, the trust fund officer shall withdraw from the plaintiff's account and pay to the Clerk of this Court monthly payments equal to twenty percent (20%) of all deposits credited to plaintiff's account during the preceding month, but only when the amount in the account exceeds \$10.00, until the entire \$250.00 filing fee is paid.

Each time that the trust fund officer makes a payment to the Court as required by this order, he shall print a copy of the prisoner's account statement showing all activity in the account since the last payment under this order and file it with the Clerk along with the payment.

All payments and account statements shall be sent to:

Clerk, United States District Court, Western District of Tennessee, 167 N. Main, Room 242, Memphis, TN 38103

and shall clearly identify plaintiff's name and the case number on the first page of this order.

If plaintiff is transferred to a different prison or released, he is ORDERED to notify the Court immediately of his change of address. If still confined he shall provide the officials at the new prison with a copy of this order.

If the plaintiff fails to abide by these or any other requirement of this order, the Court may impose appropriate sanctions, including a monetary fine, without any additional notice or hearing by the Court.

The Clerk shall mail a copy of this order to the prison official in charge of prison trust fund accounts at plaintiff's prison. The Clerk is further ORDERED to forward a copy of this order to the Warden to ensure that the custodian of the plaintiff's inmate trust account complies with that portion of the PLRA pertaining to the payment of filing fees.

The obligation to pay this filing fee shall continue despite the immediate dismissal of this case. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2). The Clerk shall not issue process or serve any papers in this case.

II. Analysis of Plaintiff's Claims

Plaintiff Hale sues NWCX Unit Manager Brent Long, Warden Tony Parker and the Tennessee Department of Correction. Plaintiff alleges that he has traded sex acts, housekeeping chores and cigarettes for legal work by an unnamed inmate legal advisor at NWCX. He further alleges that on July 22, 2005, the inmate advisor told defendant Unit Manager Brent Long that "he wanted nothing to do with" plaintiff and would not "do legal work for free." He alleges this action denied him access to the courts. Plaintiff also alleges that the inmate legal advisor jeopardized plaintiff's life by disclosing the nature of his conviction. Plaintiff does not allege to whom the inmate legal helper disclosed this information, nor does he allege that he has actually been threatened as a result of the disclosure. Plaintiff contends that prison officials have a duty to keep him safe. He seeks a temporary restraining order which will keep him confined to a particular housing unit "until further notice." Plaintiff alleges that he filed a grievance, which was deemed

inappropriate. He also alleges that he wrote defendant Warden Parker and the TDOC Commissioner and received no responses to his letters.

The Sixth Circuit has held that 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a) requires a federal court to dismiss a complaint without prejudice whenever a prisoner brings a prison conditions claim without demonstrating that he has exhausted his administrative remedies. Brown v. Toombs, 139 F.3d 1102 (6th Cir. 1998); see Porter v. Nussle, 534 U.S. 516, 532 (2002) ("[T]he PLRA's exhaustion requirement applies to all inmate suits about prison life, whether they involve general circumstances or particular episodes, and whether they allege excessive force or some other wrong."); Booth v. Churner, 532 U.S. 731 (2001) (prisoner seeking only money damages must exhaust administrative remedies although damages are unavailable through grievance system). This requirement places an affirmative burden on prisoners to plead particular facts that demonstrate the complete exhaustion of claims. Knuckles El v. Toombs, 215 F.3d 640, 642 (6th Cir. 2000). To comply with the mandates of 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a),

a prisoner must plead his claims with specificity and show that they have been exhausted by attaching a copy of the applicable administrative dispositions to the complaint or, in the absence of written documentation, describe with specificity the administrative proceeding and its outcome.

Id. at 642; see also Baxter v. Rose, 305 F.3d 486 (6th Cir. 2002) (prisoner who fails to allege exhaustion adequately may not amend his complaint to avoid a sua sponte dismissal); Curry v. Scott, 249 F.3d 493, 503-04 (6th Cir. 2001) (no abuse of discretion for district court to dismiss for failure to exhaust when plaintiffs did not submit documents showing complete exhaustion of their claims or otherwise demonstrate exhaustion). Furthermore, § 1997(e) requires

the prisoner to exhaust his administrative remedies before filing suit and, therefore, he cannot exhaust these remedies during the pendency of the action. Freeman v. Francis, 196 F.3d 641, 645 (6th Cir. 1999).

Plaintiff's complaint raises issues of personal safety, housing, and court access. The plaintiff has submitted no evidence that he actually filed a grievance on any issue presented. More specifically, he does not demonstrate that he filed a grievance naming these individual defendants, as required by Moorer v. Price, 83 Fed. Appx. 770, 772 (6th Cir. Dec. 9, 2003) (plaintiff did not exhaust claim against warden because his grievance did not identify the warden or articulate any claim against her); Thomas v. Woolum, 337 F.3d 720, 733-34 (6th Cir. 2003); and Curry, 249 F.3d at 504.² Accordingly, the plaintiff has not satisfied his burden of demonstrating that he exhausted his administrative remedies with respect to this claim.

The Sixth Circuit has stated that "[a] plaintiff who fails to allege exhaustion of administrative remedies through 'particularized averments' does not state a claim on which relief may be granted, and

² Letters and petitions are no substitute for a formal inmate grievance. Shephard v. Wilkinson, 27 Fed. Appx. 526, 527 (6th Cir. Dec. 5, 2001) ("While Shephard asserts that he has raised his complaints in numerous letters to prison and public officials, a prisoner must utilize the formal grievance process provided by the state; he cannot comply with the requirements of § 1997e(a) by informally presenting his claims."); Hewell v. Leroux, 20 Fed. Appx. 375, 377 (6th Cir. Sept. 21, 2001) (same); see also Clark v. Beebe, No. 98-1430, 1999 WL 993979, at *2 (6th Cir. Oct. 21, 1999) (district court erred in holding that prisoner had substantially complied with exhaustion requirement by writing a letter to the U.S. Attorney's office that eventually made its way to the warden of plaintiff's prison).

his complaint must be dismissed sua sponte." Baxter, 305 F.3d at 489.³ Accordingly, the plaintiff's complaint is DISMISSED, without prejudice, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1997e(a).

III. Appeal Issues

The next issue to be addressed is whether plaintiff should be allowed to appeal this decision in forma pauperis. Twenty-eight U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) provides that an appeal may not be taken in forma pauperis if the trial court certifies in writing that it is not taken in good faith.

The good faith standard is an objective one. Coppedge v. United States, 369 U.S. 438, 445 (1962). An appeal is not taken in good faith if the issue presented is frivolous. Id. Accordingly, it would be inconsistent for a district court to determine that a complaint should be dismissed prior to service on the defendants, yet has sufficient merit to support an appeal in forma pauperis. See Williams v. Kullman, 722 F.2d 1048, 1050 n.1 (2d Cir. 1983). The same considerations that lead the Court to dismiss this case also compel the conclusion that an appeal would not be taken in good faith.

It is therefore CERTIFIED, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3), that any appeal in this matter by plaintiff is not taken in good faith and he may not proceed on appeal in forma pauperis.

³ As the Sixth Circuit explained, "If the plaintiff has exhausted his administrative remedies, he may always refile his complaint and plead exhaustion with sufficient detail to meet our heightened pleading requirement, assuming that the relevant statute of limitations has not run." Id.

The final matter to be addressed is the assessment of a filing fee if plaintiff appeals the dismissal of this case.⁴ In McGore v. Wrigglesworth, 114 F.3d 601, 610-11 (6th Cir. 1997), the Sixth Circuit set out specific procedures for implementing the PLRA. Therefore, the plaintiff is instructed that if he wishes to take advantage of the installment procedures for paying the appellate filing fee, he must comply with the procedures set out in McGore and § 1915(b).

IT IS SO ORDERED this 29th day of March, 2006.

/s/ Jon P. McCalla
JON PHIPPS MCCALLA
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

⁴ Effective November 1, 2003, the fee for docketing an appeal is \$250. See Judicial Conference Schedule of Fees, ¶ 1, Note following 28 U.S.C. § 1913. Under 28 U.S.C. § 1917, a district court also charges a \$5 fee:

Upon the filing of any separate or joint notice of appeal or application for appeal or upon the receipt of any order allowing, or notice of the allowance of, an appeal or of a writ of certiorari \$5 shall be paid to the clerk of the district court, by the appellant or petitioner.